

I will come back from the dead for you by TolkienGirl

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Summary: When does tired turn into getting old? [Nancy future-fic]

I will come back from the dead for you

You just wanted to prove there was one safe place, just one safe place where you could love him. You have not found that place yet. You have not made that place yet. You are here. You are here. You're still right here.

- Richard Siken

Hey Mom, Nancy wants to say, passing her hands over the closed eyes of a corpse, Hey. I'm not coming home again.

It is important, maybe, to acknowledge—

Her mom isn't dead.

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Five years since Barb was buried. Six, seven, eight.

Out of college, out of time. Steve's getting married. Remember Steve? Steve with the perfect hair, Steve with the straight teeth? Steve with the bat and the heart that loved you only after you stopped wanting him to, Steve who survived?

I'm not coming home again. Think about that. Think about what it means, to never go home, to never *want* to go home, but to want all the people who live there.

Mike in his freshman year. Mike with hands that don't shake, because they *did* shake, once, and he learned better. Mike with a camera, oh, God, don't think about the camera—

When does *getting tired* turn into *getting old*?

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Nancy has an English degree because she can bullshit things. She has a job as a journalist in Salt Lake City because that's far away from Hawkins, and being far away from Hawkins is the only direction there is. She writes about local crime and it's so simple. So simple,

that somebody who wants money punched in the window of a gas station. No dark vines of another explanation, no reason that doesn't sound like a reason.

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Dear Nancy,

Are you coming home for Christmas?

I'm in a play at church. I'm Mary. I get to wear blue, it's kind of pretty. The baby isn't real though.

Love,

Holly

.

Ok, what was the thing about never going home?

Go home, kiss your living mother, go home, your father's a stranger, go home, Mike's at college, go home, Jonathan Byers has never moved on.

Stand in the back of Holly's play with the moth-eaten velvet curtains slithering across the stage. Stand in the back and pretend you're not looking for love. Pretend that you forgot him, that you forget any of it, any of this.

Pretend that you meant it when you said goodbye.

Pretend that you want to be in Utah forever.

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"Hey, Nancy."

"Hi."

Jonathan's hair is a little neater now, still long enough to fall over his forehead. Hers is flat-ironed, and reaches the hollow of her collarbone, where his lips once touched.

"I'm not staying long."

He could say, *you never do*, and he'd be right, right about her, right about the girl trying to be someone else in an upstairs bedroom, right about the girl with ozone in her mouth. The girl couldn't kill the monster, so another girl did. The girl couldn't come home, so she stopped trying.

"It's good to see you." He keeps looking her in the eyes, none of the old shyness, none of the old uncertainty. "You're in Utah these days?"

These days have stretched out into something that always feels like the past. "Yeah." It doesn't even sound like her voice.

"I'm going to California." Still those eyes. The little rasp in his throat. The hands that took her photograph and her heart, tucked in his pockets. "If you ever want to look me up."

.

(It is important to acknowledge, maybe, that she still loves him.)

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What he says later, lips against her collarbone, is, "Don't you want to come home?"